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ABSTRACT

Research on student development has shown positive effects of institutional smallness on most student outcome variables. However, no clear relationship of ruralness to these outcome measures has been shown. The limited literature on small/rural community colleges includes two areas relevant to student development: college characteristics, which include factors both advantageous and disadvantageous to student development, and research on undermanning theory, which suggests that undermanned environments increase the involvement and learning of their inhabitants. It can be inferred that small/rural community college have a positive impact on the development of students, though the inference is based on research which reports the collective impact of all types of small colleges. Among the trends in student service operations in small/rural community colleges are: (1) staff organizational relationships are becoming more traditional; (2) the realization that effective planning and wise utilization of resources are not dependent upon large sums of money; (3) admissions and registration functions are being moved to the supervision of the dean of instruction rather than the dean of students; (4) fewer counselors are full-time; and (5) student personnel services and instructional services are being organized under one administrative head. (Recommendations to researchers, policy makers, and faculty are offered.) (MB)

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STUDENT DEVELOPMENT--COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT OF PROGRAMS IN SMALL/RURAL COMMUNITY COLLEGES

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"...institutional size has implications for student development..."
(Chickering, 1969, p. 186)

"Almost all student involvement in campus life is decreased by attending a large rather than a small institution. Students at large colleges are less likely to interact with faculty, to get involved in campus government, to participate in athletics, to become involved in honors programs, and to be verbally aggressive in their classrooms."
(Astin, 1977, p. 230)

Research on student development has shown positive effects of institutional smallness on most student outcome variables. Research findings, however, have shown no clear relationship of ruralness to student outcome measures. These statements capture the essence of a dilemna basic to a discussion of student development in small/rural community colleges. If we stick strictly to what is known and supported by research findings, we are limited severely in what can be said about the topic. If we make inferences from what is known about small school environments to the small/rural community college we risk considerable error and may raise questions of our credibility.

The truth is that little is known, based on research, about student development in rural and in small/rural community colleges. From a empirical perspective, the bulk of what is known about small college student development is inferred from knowledge and research about student development in several types of small schools. Nevertheless, we accept the risks inherent in a discussion of the topic and will proceed with caution inferring about the development of students in small/rural community colleges.

COLLEGE IMPACT ON STUDENTS

Summarizing selected literature on small/rural community colleges yields two categories of information especially relevant to student development. The first category may be labeled as characteristics of small/rural community colleges. At first glance, many of these characteristics appear to be advantageous to student development and others appear to be disadvantageous. A second, more careful examination suggests that any of the qualities may be seen as an advantage or disadvantage under certain conditions. Figure 1 summarizes this point and lists certain facts reported consistently in the limited literature on small/rural community colleges.

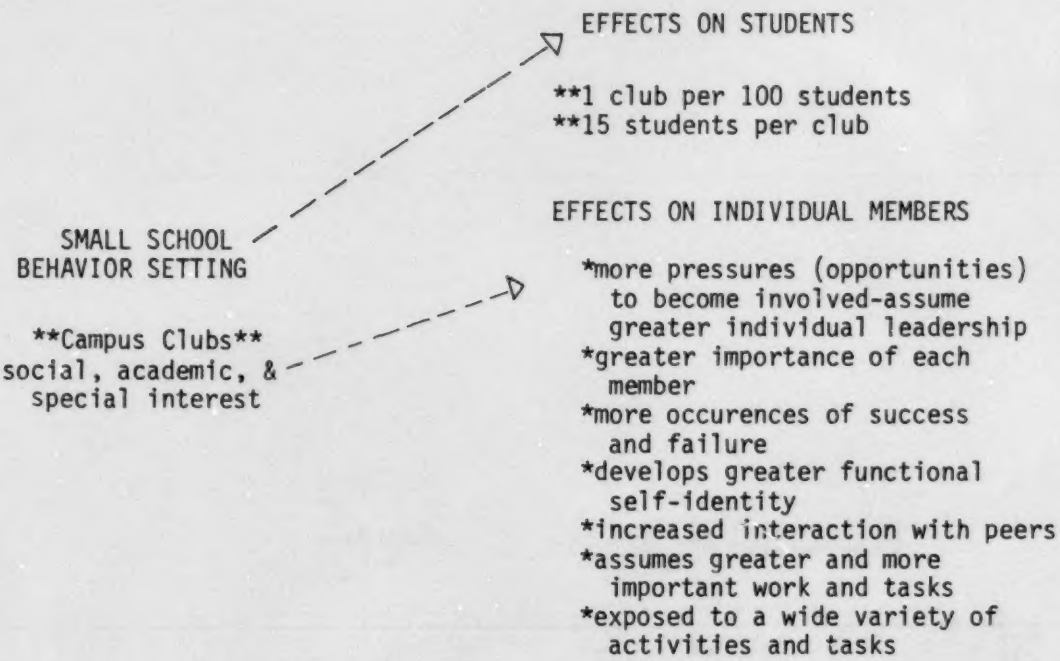
FIGURE 1

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
*open door admission	*limited community resources
*low/no tuition	*public school experienced staff
*geographically accessible	*lack of graduate jobs/parttime student jobs
*low threat environment	*limited student housing
*faculty/peer interaction	*limited curriculum
	*problems attracting and retaining personnel
	*lack of time and expertise of research/service
	*personnel wear "many hats"

The second category rooted in research on undermanning theory. Research on the effects of smallness on human development and behavior in small high schools and small communities supports the inference that undermanned environments (more behavior settings and tasks to be performed than occupants inthe settings) increase the involvement and learning of setting inhabitants (Barker and Gump, 1964.) Figure 2 illustrates the effects of a hypothetical small school behavior setting

(student club) on the development and behavior of club members.

FIGURE 2


EFFECTS ON STUDENTS
**1 club per 100 students
**15 students per club
EFFECTS ON INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS
*more pressures (opportunities) to become involved-assume greater individual leadership
*greater importance of each member
*more occurences of success and failure
*develops greater functional self-identity
*increased interaction with peers
*assumes greater and more important work and tasks
*exposed to a wide variety of activities and tasks
SMALL SCHOOL BEHAVIOR SETTING
Campus Clubs social, academic, & special interest

From our study of research on small schools, we infer cautiously that small/rural community colleges have a positive impact on the development of students. Our inferences are not without problems however. Since these inferences are based on research which reports the collective impact of all types of small colleges, research on liberal arts colleges and high schools, and single-college studies which are often not generalizable, we may be guilty of errors of interpretation.

THEORIES, MODELS AND PRACTICES

In addition to 'student development' referring to the impact of colleges on students, recently the term has gained widespread usage as a synonym for student personnel services. In professional student personnel circles, the term

is used frequently to refer to particular models or practices designed to impact positively growth and learning of students.

Contrary to the opinion of certain critics, student development as a professional field is grounded firmly in theory. Rodgers (1978) has reviewed four families of related theory and one family of models relevant to the practice of student development in higher education. Student development in small/rural community colleges, like all other types of colleges and universities, need to base their practices upon viable theory. One table from Rodgers work is presented here without further discussion to illustrate the depth and variety of theoretical models available to practitioners upon which to mold their programs.

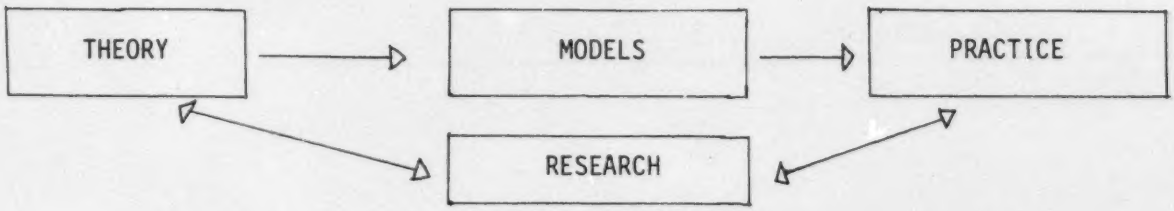
TABLE 1

Families of Theory or Models & Their Representatives

Cognitive Development Theory	Psychosocial Theory	Person-Environment Interaction Theory	Humanistic Existential Theory	Student Development Process Models
Piaget	Freud	Barker	Rogers	COSPA I
Kohlberg	Jung	Astin	Maslow	COSPA II
Perry	Erikson	Clark-Trow	Frankl	T.H.E.
Loevinger	Chickering	Holland	May	Ecosystems
Fowler	White	Stern	Jourard	Colorado State "Cube"
Harvey, Hunt & Schroeder	Sanford	Pace		Grounded Formal Theory
Isaac	Sheehy	Moos		Developmental Instruction
Kegan	Gould	Pervin		
Sullivan, Grant & Grant	Levinson			
	Vaillant			
	D. Heath			
	R. Heath			

Simple logic tells us that theory, models, practice, and relevant action research should be interrelated. Figure 3 represents this logic.

FIGURE 3



Experienced observers have reported certain changes in student service operations in recent years in small/rural community colleges. Among these trends are the following:

1. Line/staff organizational relationships are becoming more traditional.
2. More professionals are realizing that effective planning and wise utilization of resources are not dependent upon large sums of money.
3. Admissions and registration functions are being moved to the supervision of the dean of instruction rather than the dean of students.
4. Fewer counselors are full time. Increasingly, counselors are assuming other responsibilities, especially teaching duties.
5. Many schools are organizing student personnel services and instructional services under one administrative head, rather than under two separate deans.

What is known about student development theory coupled with what is known about organization development theory suggests certain patterns for focusing student service strategies for maximum possible impact on student outcomes. The key to this logic is found in research on student development wherein certain interaction effects are analysed. For example, we know that positive student/faculty

interaction leads to positive student outcomes. It is presumed, then, that student service strategies should intentionally focus on these interaction opportunities and that doing so would increase the likelihood of positive development of students. Figure 4 summarizes six potential targets for student service strategies.

FIGURE 4

Focus of Student Development Strategies

DIRECT INTERACTION EFFECTS	INDIRECT INTERACTION EFFECTS
Student/student	Individual/individual
Student/faculty	Intergroup
Student/environment	Individual/organization

RECOMMENDATIONS

Our study of the status of student development in small/rural community colleges leads us to suggest that the following professionals and agencies should focus more of their activities and efforts on concerns of small/rural community colleges.

*Researchers--

Since little is known about the development of students attending small/rural, small, and rural community colleges research efforts should be accelerated to study the impact of these colleges on students. Not only should this responsibility fall to individual institutions but researchers such as Astin, Chickering and others who conduct national studies should design their studies so that the impact of

of these types of colleges may be better understood. Additionally, the efficiency and quality of services and programs at these colleges should be examined through research.

*Local, State and Federal Policy Makers/Foundations

Since more than one-half of all U.S. community colleges consider themselves small and/or rural colleges and since little has been done to understand the 'state of the art' of these colleges, state and federal authorities and certain foundations should focus efforts on the study of the small/rural community colleges. Policy makers should become more aware of the problems inherent in these colleges as they explore equity in funding patterns.

*Universities/Larger Community Colleges/Professional Association

ince few professionals in small/rural community colleges are specialists, and since typically generalists do not have the knowledge or skills to assume specialized tasks such as entensive research or assessment practices, outside groups should offer assistance to these small/rural community college professionals. Additionally, university graduate education programs should increase their awareness and knowledge of the concerns of small/rural community colleges. The transmission of this knowledge and concern by universities should be included in many students' graduate programs.

*Teachers/Counselors/Administrators

Small/rural community college professionals should work collaboratively in efforts to simulate the residential environment. Student/faculty interaction, extra-curricular and co-curricular opportunities, and student self-directed activities should be accelerated.

Professionals should utilize community, campus and professional resources more effectively. Additionally, on-going staff development programs and activities in small/rural communitye colleges should focus on collaborative ventures and a major trust should be student development.

Formative and summative assessment activities should be accelerated by the

Formative and summative assessment activities should be accelerated by the institutions and by others concerned with a total college commitment to student development.

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